Period	FTAs (in Million)	Growth over previous year
2007	5.08	14.3%
2008*	5.37	5.6%
2009* January-June	2.47	-9.3%

*Provisional

While the number of FTAs during 2007 and 2008 show a rising trend, during the period January-June, 2009 there has been a decline. However, a positive growth rate of 0.2% in FTAs was observed in June, 2009 over June, 2008.

The decline in FTAs in recent months may be due to various reasons including global financial melt-down and terrorist activities.

Ministry of Tourism, through its India-tourism offices overseas is undertaking a series of promotional activities with the objective of increasing FTAs. These activities include advertising, participation in travel fairs, exhibitions, road shows, India evenings, seminars and workshops, Indian food and cultural festivals, publication of brochures, inviting media personalities, tour operators and opinion makers to visit the country under the Hospitality Programme of the Ministry.

In addition, a "Visit India 2009" Scheme has been announced by the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with all stakeholders including airlines, hotels, tour operators, State Governments for incentivising travel to India during the current year.

The Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism has been expanded so as to provide financial assistance to service providers for the promotion of Medical and Convention and Conference Tourism in the country.

Clearance for Starwood Hotels

2214. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Starwood Hotels and Resorts propose to open some hotels in the country by 2011;

(b) if so, the locations identified; and

(c) whether Government has given clearance for the projects?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA): (a) to (c) Construction of hotels is primarily a private sector activity. The Government has permitted 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the field of hotel sector thus allowing the entry of international hotel brands into the country. Ministry of Tourism approves hotel projects at implementation stage as per the laid down 'Guidelines'. However, no application for approval of hotel project from Starwood is pending with Ministry of Tourism.